

SWAP NEWS

Montana Source Water Assessment Program Update
by Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

SOURCE WATER ASSESSMENT

PROGRAM DOCUMENT SUBMITTED TO EPA *What Next?*

Montana's Source Water Assessment Program (SWAP) was formally submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 8 for review in mid-January, two weeks before the deadline. EPA headquarters also will review the program document, barring any major concerns by EPA Region 8. The focus of EPA's review

will be whether Montana's program meets the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act. The whole review process including modifications must be completed by November 1999.

In the interim, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will begin implementing the source water

assessment provisions approved under the existing Wellhead Protection Program. Only delineations and assessments for surface water sources and susceptibility assessments will be delayed until the complete program is approved. Currently, DEQ with help from the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology (MBMG), is collecting basic

data on public water systems. Data, including the map location of wells or intakes and field water chemistry indicators, are being collected. Data on systems determined to be most vulnerable to contamination will be collected first.

Delineations and Assessments for nearly 2000 public water systems must be completed by May 2002. Much of the work will be conducted by staff of the Source Water Protection Section at DEQ. Also, a pass-through grant program has been setup to distribute up to \$750K to public water systems for them to contract to have the work done. The grant program works on a partial

match basis and will be administered according to ranking criteria that consider vulnerability among other factors. DEQ hopes that the pass-through grant program and other incentives will tap into the experience of consultants or research organizations such as MBMG and State Universities to complete delineations and assessments.

The SWAP newsletter will be published quarterly to provide updates on the Source Water Assessment Program. Also, feel free to call Source Water Protection staff at the phone numbers listed below or visit our web page at: <http://water.montana.edu/SWP/>. _

SOURCE WATER ASSESSMENT PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the source(s) of water used by Public Water Systems.

Source water protection areas are delineated for ground water and surface water sources. This is a technical process that considers characteristics of the aquifer or watershed and the public water system intake in order to identify the land area that contributes recharge to the hydrologic or hydrogeologic system above or upgradient from the public water system well or intake structure.

2. Identify and Inventory Potential Contaminant Sources

Potential contaminant sources within the source water protection area are identified. Regulated contaminants of concern in Montana include nitrate, microbial contaminants, and certain fuels, solvents, herbicides, pesticides, and metals. Potential sources of these types of contaminants include septic systems, animal feeding operations, underground storage tanks, floor

drains and sumps, and certain land use activities.

3. Assess the Susceptibility of Public Water Systems to potential contaminant sources.

A susceptibility assessment consists of evaluating the integrity of the well or intake and relative threat posed by potential contaminant sources. A determination of relative susceptibility will be made for each potential contaminant source identified within the source water protection area.

4. Make the results of the delineation and assessment available to the public.

Source water assessments must be made available to the public. Various media will be used including consumer confidence reports, the SWP Internet site, public library postings, local health department postings, and others.

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SWAP HIGHLIGHTS

WATER ASSESSMENT?

● Public water systems will receive a technical report describing their water source(s) sometime before May 2002. Alternatively, public water systems

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may be able to use their own contractor to do the work.

② Property or business owners engaged in certain activities regulated by DEQ may be identified on maps provided to public water systems. The information is provided to encourage communication and cooperation between public water systems and those that may impact the water resource.

③ There may be opportunities for environmental consultants or researchers to contract with public water systems to conduct delineations and assessments.

④ Information about their water supply will be made available to users of public water systems.

⑤ Most Montanans will continue to enjoy the existing high quality of public drinking water. _

■ The program is applicable to all public water systems and types of water sources.

■ The program will prescribe methods and criteria for delineating source water protection areas and assessing the susceptibility of public water systems to contamination.

- The program is being developed by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality with input from an advisory council and the public.
- The program is subject to EPA review and approval prior to implementation. The Montana program was submitted to EPA in mid January 1999.
- Delineations and assessments will be provided to each public water system by or through the Montana DEQ using dollars set aside by Congress for this purpose.

(Public Meetings continued)

At the public meetings, the department asked people to comment on the new program before the state submitted its program to the EPA for review and approval. Four evening meetings were held; November 12, in Kalispell, November 16 in Billings, November 17, in Wolf Point, and November 18, in Great Falls. The evening meetings followed an open house format and

**SOURCE WATER
ASSESSMENT
PROGRAM
ADVISORY
COUNCIL**



were relatively well attended at all locations. _

- Delineation and assessments will be compiled into a report consisting of a map and report for each public water system.
- Assistance is available to public water systems to help them utilize the delineation and assessment report to develop local source water protection plans. _

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality conducted a series of public meetings across Montana to discuss certain changes in the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act requiring the development of the Montana Source Water Assessment

Now that the program has been submitted to EPA, will the advisory council disband? The short answer is no! Technically, the order creating the council expires after 2 years meaning the council will exist until May, 2000. However, until that time the council will continue to help DEQ through the EPA review process and into the

**OTHER SOURCE
WATER
PROTECTION
TRAINING
SOURCE WATER
PROTECTION
TRAINING FOR
PUBLIC WATER
SYSTEM
OPERATORS**

implementation period. To fulfill their responsibility the council will be called upon to continue to advise the state on how to use the assessments in implementing the program through the end of the life of the council. _

Program. (continued on page 3)

**PUBLIC MEETINGS ON
THE SOURCE WATER
ASSESSMENT
PROGRAM**

Training for public water system operators is being designed by the Drinking Water Assistance Program at MSU to provide convenient and fun ways to learn and to maintain continuing education requirements. The first topic to include major training components (interactive presentation and quizzes) will be Source Water Protection. The CD-ROM version should be available in early 1999 and will be demonstrated at the Montana Rural Water Systems (MRWS) conference and exhibition in Great Falls on 2/18/99. _

The American Water Works Association is sponsoring a 2-day seminar entitled *Source Water Protection-Effective Tools and Techniques You Can Use*. The seminar is intended to provide an overview of national delineation and assessment issues plus an opportunity to interact with state program managers. The seminars are being held at several locations around the country in February, March, and April. (See <http://www.awwa.org/tande/eduframe.htm> for location). Montana DEQ will be represented at the Seattle site on April 15/16. _

Joe Meek and Russell Levens met with Shelly Nolan of the Havre Public Water System and several interested parties on November 18, 1998, to discuss the Havre Source Water Demonstration Project. In attendance were representatives from the Havre Conservation District, Hill and Liberty County Conservation Districts, Hill County Health Department, Sage Creek Watershed Alliance, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad. The intent of the meeting was to inform people involved in watershed activities of the SWAP demonstration project, **(Surface Water continued)**

divided into regions to distinguish between areas where it takes only hours for water to reach a public water system intake and areas where it may take days or years. Two different regions are identified with different management objectives. The spill response region emphasizes the threat of potential chemical spills and sources of microbial contaminants. Spill response regions will extend one-half mile from intakes and include one-half mile wide buffers for a four-hour time-of-travel distance upstream from the intake. The watershed region is a much larger area that will be managed to protect the long term quality of drinking water sources from large point contaminant sources and non-point sources. Watershed regions will be delineated under Montana's program according to four watershed management regions.

The preliminary source water protection area for Havre consists of a spill response region that extends along the Milk River and its tributaries for a distance of 10 miles upstream from the water intake. An inventory of potential contaminant sources for the Havre spill response region will focus on hazards associated with sources of contaminants with acute health affects, large EPA regulated facilities, highway or railroad

determine the level of interest, and learn of any on-going projects in the watershed. Those in attendance agreed to serve as a steering committee for the SWAP project. Russell Levens will meet with the steering committee again on January 29, 1999, prior to attending a "Know Your Watershed" activity put on by the Montana Watercourse on January 30, 1999. The second meeting is planned to discuss a preliminary delineation and assessment for Havre. Also, Montana DEQ will have an

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crossings, and pipeline crossings.

The Milk River falls in the Lower Missouri Watershed Management Region. Large industrial facilities and general land uses will be identified throughout the watershed region. Management to protect or improve drinking water quality in the watershed region will be coordinated through DEQ's watershed coordinator for the Lower Missouri and will be accomplished through the Nonpoint and TMDL programs. _

In future newsletters delineation and



informational display at the Jan. 30th meeting.

Source water protection areas for surface water sources like Havre's are (continued on page 4)

assessment and source water protection plan development activities will be summarized in this section. Projects that have been initiated or completed and grants that have been awarded during the previous quarter will be listed. Also, readers will be informed on how to get access to the results of completed delineation and assessment reports or protection plans. _

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